

VZCZCXRO8615  
RR RUEHPA  
DE RUEHFR #4521/01 3201739  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 161739Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1157  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 2132

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 004521

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [TO](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: TOGO: AMBASSADOR DUNN'S CONSULTATIONS WITH THE  
FRENCH

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d  
).

¶1. (C) SUBJECT: UFC opposition party leader Gilchrist Olympio told visiting U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn on November 8 that he thought that his opposition party deserved a prominent role in Togo's government given the roughly 50 percent of the vote that it won during the October 14 legislative elections, but he was not confident that the Faure Gnassingbe government would be willing to offer such a role. Olympio also said that the UFC would not participate in the government unless the Faure government offered to make a UFC official Prime Minister. French officials at the Presidency, MFA, and MOD viewed the October 14 elections positively, but cautioned that France, the U.S., and others should remind the Togolese that they needed to continue democratic reform. The French were wary that hardline RPT members might seek to use the RPT's large legislative majority as a mandate that would allow the RPT to govern as it wished, without regard to additional democratic reforms. Our contact at the French Presidency said that the GOF would actively pursue convicted criminal and Gnassingbe insider Charles Debbasch. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn met separately with UFC leader Gilchrist Olympio, AF Presidential advisor Remi Marechaux, MFA AF PDAS Caroline Dumas and desk officer Daniel Westerink, and MOD official Jerome Spinoza November 8-9 during a stop-over in Paris.

Gilchrist Olympio  
-----

¶3. (C) Olympio, with whom Ambassador Dunn had met in Accra just after the October 14 legislative elections, displayed his usual mixture of defiance and victimization during a meeting at his home on November 8. Although conceding that the elections had been relatively well organized and free of violence, Olympio's central theme/complaint was the unfairness, in his view, that the opposition received only 31 seats (27 by the UFC), in contrast to the RPT's 50 seats, despite the opposition's receiving about 50 percent of the popular vote. Olympio deemed this unjust and undemocratic and believed that something had to be done to allow for a greater role for the opposition in governing Togo. Ambassador Dunn noted that the agreement prior to the elections had been to hold the elections and to reform the electoral process thereafter, including the question of electoral districts, which, as everyone was aware, were distorted.

¶4. (C) Olympio was not mollified by the fact that the format for the vote was well known in advance and that the allocation of seats and voting districts always carried the possibility of disproportionate numbers of seats going to one party, or the other, depending on how each district voted. That in fact is what happened, with the RPT gaining a larger than expected majority at the opposition's expense. Olympio

also viewed with some suspicion the last-minute decision to place stickers on the backs of ballots, and he expressed doubt that the stickers could have been printed and distributed so quickly. He indicated that he was continuing to contest one of the Lome seats now held by an RPT electee.

15. (C) Olympio said that he met privately with President Faure under Burkina Faso President Compaore's auspices after the elections, indicating that he had expressed his misgivings to Faure about the elected legislature's failure to represent the popular vote, although he said that he told Faure that he could accept the results and the numbers. Olympio claimed that Faure suggested that the RPT and UFC should work together, which Olympio did not agree with Faure to do.

16. (C) The problem, Olympio continued, was that electoral and other reforms would not be feasible with the present legislature, dominated by the RPT. He referred repeatedly to the need to obtain concessions from the ruling party that would allow the opposition a greater role in governing Togo, although he acknowledged the opposition's lack of leverage. He spoke of meeting personally with Faure but could not say what he could use to persuade him, other than the "fairness" argument. Olympio referred to the 1992 constitution that had been accepted by voters but that Eyadema later suspended. Olympio said that it contained useful provisions, but he was not sure that it could be revived.

17. (C) When Ambassador Dunn probed about the UFC's intentions regarding participation in the post-election government Faure would assemble, Olympio said, in an almost off-hand manner, that the UFC would not participate in the new government unless it were offered the Prime Minister

PARIS 00004521 002 OF 003

position. Using virtually the same words he had used a year ago, Olympio said, "we won't accept being given only the sports and youth ministry." Olympio said that he was going to Accra on November 9 and then would continue to Lome.

18. (C) COMMENT: The elections seem to have affected Olympio's thinking in several respects -- first, they had been held in a non-violent and relatively acceptable manner, which did not provide much opportunity to criticize Faure over how they had been conducted. Second, the fact that the opposition won far fewer seats than the vote count would suggest seemed to raise his fears that yet again he had been the victim of manipulation, although he could not claim that he was unaware going into the elections that such would be possible. Third, he said several times that he would implore Faure to make concessions to the opposition but could not identify any leverage, other than appeals to "fairness," that he could employ to move Faure to do so or to enforce any concessions Faure might initially make. Notably, Olympio, who had previously referred to Faure disparagingly as "le petit, the boy, le garcon, and le fils," on one occasion called Faure "the young man," perhaps an unwitting acknowledgment that Faure was a shrewder and more formidable rival than Olympio had believed him to be. END COMMENT.

#### Meetings with French Officials

19. (C) Marechaux (AF Advisor at the Presidency), Dumas and Westerink (MFA PDAS and desk officer), and Spinoza (MOD Strategic Affairs Delegation) all agreed that the elections were a positive step and that Togo was moving in the right direction. They agreed that the RPT had done better than expected, in view of which they expressed caution that RPT hardliners not take the large parliamentary majority as a mandate for Faure and the RPT to govern as they might wish, with no regard for the opposition (or the approximately 50 percent of the voting population that had voted for the opposition). As Marechaux put it, "maybe they won too much." He expressed concern about backsliding on the RPT's part. Spinoza at the MOD took a slightly different, more

optimistic, position, expressing the hope that the large parliamentary majority might allow the RPT to relax and act more magnanimously.

¶10. (C) Dumas and Marechaux said that France was going to continue telling the Faure government that it had to keep pursuing reform and democratization. They were dismayed to learn that Olympio had said that he would not participate in the government if the UFC were not offered the Prime Ministry, and they agreed with Ambassador Dunn's view that the UFC might have done better in the elections if it had decided to participate in the government at a much earlier stage. The French officials said they valued Ambassador Dunn's views since a new French Ambassador (Dominique Renaux) would soon take office in Lome. Both sides promised to maintain the close contact the French and American missions in Togo had enjoyed in recent years.

¶11. (C) Dumas discussed how the elections and Togo's progress toward democracy could affect the resumption of EU assistance, much of which was blocked during the Eyadema era and thereafter. The legislative elections were an important indicator when considering aid. She noted that FM Kouchner wanted to include a stop in Lome during an African tour to Burkina Faso and the DRC but that Faure was in Washington at the time consulting with the World Bank and IMF. (NOTE: The Kouchner visit to Africa was later canceled. END NOTE.) Clearly, the Togolese were well aware that their own behavior would have great influence with potential donors and they were perhaps tailoring policies accordingly.

¶12. (C) Marechaux confided that France would become more active in seeking custody of Charles Debbasch, the French law professor and constitutional expert who had long served as a counselor to the Gnassingbes (and other African autocrats). Debbasch had been convicted of fraud and embezzlement in France, a conviction upheld on appeal, and had sought refuge in Togo. Ambassador Dunn noted his own sightings of Debbasch in Lome. Marechaux said that President Sarkozy was adamant that renegade French citizens such as Debbasch not be allowed to run around unhindered in Africa, which only fueled suspicions that France, or at least its citizens, was still pulling the strings somehow. He wanted Debbasch apprehended and put into prison in France, to serve as an example of how France would treat people like him and others of his ilk. Marechaux also mentioned French arms dealer Robert Montoya, also resident in Togo, as another target, but said that France would make Debbasch its first priority, since he had already been convicted in a French court. Marechaux did not specify the actions France would take but seemed to indicate that pressure would be placed on the Togolese to release

PARIS 00004521 003 OF 003

Debbasch into French custody.

¶13. (U) Ambassador Dunn has cleared this message.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

STAPLETON